foodgrains, and to enable the farmers to get the best prices for their produce, achieve price stability and ensure availability of foodgrains in deficit areas, Government (Deptt. of Consumer Affairs) has issued a Central Order titled 'Removal of (Licensing requirements, Stock limits and Movement restrictions) on Specified Foodstuffs Order, 2002', under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 on 15.2.2002, according to which any dealer can freely buy, stock, sell, transport, distribute, dispose, acquire, use or consume any quantity of wheat, paddy/rice, coarse grains, sugar, edible oilseeds and edible oils and shall not require any license or permit therefor. The Order has come into force after 30 days from the date of its issue.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Principal Distribution Centres in Himachal Pradesh

933. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal for opening of new Principal Distribution Centres in far flung and snow bound areas of Himachal Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The request of the State Government of Himachal Pradesh has been received for opening of six new additional Principal Distribution Centres (PDCs) at the following places under the Hill Transport subsidy Scheme:—

(i) Bara Bengal in Distt. Kangra (ii) Shillaai in Distt. Sirmour (iii) Barot-Janjehlli in Distt. Mandi (iv) Pooh in Distt. Kannaur (v) Dodra Kawar-Chopal in Distt. Shimla and (vi) Kandhar (Mangal)- Nalagarh in Distt. Solan.

The Government has recently fixed the minimum criteria for

declaration of locations as Principal Distribution Centres in the hilly States covered under Hill Transport Subsidy Scheme. The State Government of Himachal Pradesh has been requested to re-examine their proposal of opening of PDCs in the light of these criteria are re-submit the same accordingly.

Sugar decontrol time-table

934. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has no plans to delay sugar decontrol time-table, scheduled for post operationalisation of future trading in sugar in 2002-2003;

(b) if so, whether his Ministry's decision to switch to a quarterly release of freesale quota, once again, after adopting monthly release during July-September;

(c) whether his Ministry also expects sugar production to fall by 15—20 lakh tonnes due to drought; and

(d) if so, what are the steps being considered in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Government has decided to effect the complete decontrol of sugar after operationalisation of futures/forward trading in sugar during the year 2002-03. Government will take a view on the question of complete decontrol of sugar after operationalisation of future/forward trading in sugar.

(b) At present there is no proposal to switch over the release of free sale quota from monthly to quarterly basis.

(c) and (d) The preliminary estimates place the sugar production during the current 2002-03 sugar season around 170 lakh tonnes, which is 13 lakh tonnes less than the last season's production. Despite anticipated marginal shortfall, there is likely to be no impact on the availability of sugar in the domestic market as sufficient carry over stocks are available with the sugar industry.